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NEWS

Winchester lawmakers, advocates, celebrate new law addressing Massachusetts physician shortage

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Sen. Jason Lewis was responsible for filing a bill in the Senate to address the shortage of physicians in the state. WINCHESTER NEWS FILE PHOTO

The following was submitted by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition:

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State lawmakers joined immigration and healthcare advocates, as well as internationally-trained physicians, to celebrate the passage of a new law that will help the state address its severe physician shortage and empower immigrant physicians to put their knowledge and skills to use to serve the residents of the Commonwealth.

“Expanding avenues for qualified internationally-trained physicians to practice in Massachusetts will not only help the state confront its vast physician shortage, but empower knowledgeable, caring and skilled immigrants eager to aid their communities,” said Elizabeth Sweet, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition. “Today’s victory is possible thanks to the support of our legislative champions, internationally-trained physicians, and advocates from across the state.”

As part of the state’s Economic Development bill, the new law allows eligible internationally-trained physicians to receive a limited license to practice medicine under the mentorship of a participating federally-qualified community health center or hospital.

Internationally-trained physicians may then apply for a restricted license to practice in a shortage area designated by the Board of Registration in Medicine, before being eligible for full licensure to practice anywhere in the state.

The mentorship program provides an alternative to the residency requirements for these physicians, who have equivalent training abroad. These physicians must meet all other qualifications for full physician licensure that are currently required.

“This significant and common-sense legislation will allow experienced physicians, who were trained internationally, to care for patients support our struggling hospitals and care facilities, while creating

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pathways for these medical professionals to become fully licensed in Massachusetts," said Sen. Jason Lewis. "I'm so proud of MIRA and the coalition that formed to bring this legislation over the finish line, and I'm excited to see the impact it will have on people's lives."

"I am excited to join with my legislative partners, Rep. Jack Lewis and Sen. Jason Lewis; MIRA; and advocates across the Commonwealth, including the Center for New Americans in Western Massachusetts, in celebrating this law," said Rep. Mindy Domb (D-Amherst). "It will benefit Massachusetts residents by increasing access to care by connecting the dots between the medical provider shortages with the existing skills and experience of Massachusetts residents who are internationally-trained as physicians."

"There are underserved communities in need of physicians in Massachusetts, and there are trained physicians unable to continue the profession they love," added Rep. Jack Patrick Lewis (D-Framingham). "Eight years ago, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition, Sen. Jason Lewis and I filed legislation that created the Massachusetts Special Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals. This bill laid the groundwork to address the shortages of physicians in primary care and community health centers in underserved communities across our Commonwealth. And last month, we passed landmark legislation in the recent economic development bill that included policies recommended by the Commission — recommendations that uphold our Commonwealth's highest standards while creating a concrete path to licensure. In addition to supporting our local and statewide economy, this language further addresses critical inequities in healthcare access across our Commonwealth. I am incredibly grateful to my colleagues in the House and Senate for supporting this innovative solution in the Economic Development package, strengthening our economy, our shared values, and uplifting every community."

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The new law will provide the state a desperately needed tool to address its severe physician shortage. In Suffolk County in 2018, for example, there were 670 patients for every one physician and in Plymouth County, there were 1,590 patients for every one physician. The lack of medical access was even worse in Bristol County, where there were 1,890 patients for every one physician.

Providing qualified internationally-trained physicians the ability to put their knowledge and skills to use will help ensure residents in these high-need areas have access to top-level care.

“Creating a path to full licensure for experienced, internationally trained physicians will immediately have an impact on improving access to high quality primary care, during a critical primary care shortage, for the most vulnerable in our communities who are served statewide at our community health centers,” said Michael Curry, president and CEO of the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers.

“Immigrants in Massachusetts not only want to put their vast knowledge and skills to use, but they want to help their communities,” said Emmanuel Owusu, executive director of the African Bridge Network. “This new law positions Massachusetts as a national leader on expanding opportunities for immigrants, attracting talents to the state and bolstering access to healthcare: A win-win for all.”

“Massachusetts is experiencing a severe physician shortage, and I am thrilled that I will finally be able to put my knowledge, skills, and experience to use in helping the state address this challenge,” sai

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Asjad, a graduate from Fatima Jinnah medical School from Pakistan and a seasoned physician from Pakistan and now Holden resident. "Massachusetts residents deserve the highest-quality healthcare, and I hope to help deliver that care very shortly. I believe this bill will help doctors like me to deliver healthcare to areas where there is shortage of U.S. physicians."

"Having trained as a physician in Nigeria and worked in the field of medicine for 14 years, I have a great passion for practicing medicine in the [Commonwealth] of Massachusetts," said Dr. Anthony Omale, a graduate from the University of Ilorin Medical School in Ilorin, Nigeria and Lowell resident. "With the passage of the new physician law, I hope to finally be able to act on that passion, while helping residents struggling to secure the healthcare access they deserve."

While the new law passed as part of the state's Economic Development bill, it was initially introduced as a piece of standalone legislation this session as H.2224 and S.1402.

Rep. Jack Patrick Lewis and Rep. Mindy Domb sponsored the House version of the bill, and Sen. Jason Lewis sponsored the Senate version.

The new law is based on findings from the 2022 State Commission on Foreign-Trained Medical Professionals Final Report, which made "recommendations regarding the licensing of internationally trained health professionals with the goal of expanding and improving medical services in rural and underserved areas."

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FEATURES

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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March 4, 2026

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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